

## **Getting Our “Acts” Together**

All of the following pieces of legislation impact the work of Educational Support Teams.

### **1. What is IDEA?**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, as PL 94-142 is now called, makes special education and related services (physical education, counseling, transportation, etc.) a federal entitlement for students with disabilities. It requires that these students be offered a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment and focuses on parent participation, procedural safeguards and confidentiality. Amendments have extended the entitlement for education to students three to five and addressed the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. States receiving federal education funds are required to identify and evaluate students with disabilities and offer them an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or, in the case of infants and toddlers, an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) of special education and related services.

### **2. What is 504?**

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 protects people with disabilities from discrimination in any program or activity receiving federal funding. Students with disabilities that substantially limit a major life activity such as learning, working, hearing, speaking, etc. may require an individual accommodation plan or specific services to ensure access to education and school sponsored activities.

### **3. What is Act 230?**

Act 230, passed in 1990 by the Vermont Legislature, was the initial piece of legislation that required all schools to establish Instructional Support Systems to ensure the early identification of students at risk and the capability of meeting their needs. It included an Instructional Support Team (IST) for collaborative problem solving to assist teachers, and it provided grants for professional development activities to meet students’ academic needs, to the extent possible, in the regular classroom.

### **4. What is Act 157?**

In 1996 Act 230 was reauthorized as Act 157 and requires that schools develop a comprehensive Educational Support System (ESS) with the capacity to provide a range of social, academic and behavioral supports. Act 157 extends the focus beyond academics to include those factors that may have a detrimental impact on a student’s school performance (i.e. nutrition, mental health, challenging life circumstances). IST’s became Educational Support Teams (EST’s) to reflect the broader focus.

### **5. What is Act 117?**

Act 117, passed in 2000, is intended to strengthen the capacity of Vermont’s education system to meet the needs of all Vermont students in the general education environment. It added increased reporting and monitoring responsibilities to examine issues of cost effectiveness, consistency and capacity statewide. Act 117 emphasizes the requirements of ESS and EST as outlined in Act 157 and increases a school’s accountability for its ESS.

## **6. What is Act 60?**

Act 60, passed in 1997, fundamentally changed state funding for education and afforded educational equity for all Vermont children. Act 60 includes provisions that ensure overall educational quality in Vermont schools, including the adoption of statewide and local academic standards; state and local assessments; early literacy programs; school action plans; reporting educational results to communities; professional development; staff evaluation; access to technical education; school quality standards; and technical assistance to low-performance schools.

## **7. What is Act 264?**

Act 264, passed in 1988, set into law Vermont's development of a comprehensive, integrated system of care for children and adolescents experiencing severe emotional disturbance and their families. It mandates and implements principles of interagency collaboration, coordination and parent involvement at all levels of decision making. In addition to providing a definition of severe emotional disturbance, it mandates State and Local Interagency Teams and includes an Advisory Committee to advise the commissioners of the Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities and the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services on the development of a comprehensive, integrated system of care.

## **8. What is Act 113?**

Act 113, passed in 2000, is designed to support safe learning environments in Vermont schools. It requires that schools develop comprehensive school discipline plans that include more than the standard discipline policies. Plans must include the school's approach to classroom management as well as procedures for informing students and parents about the discipline policies and notifying and working with parents about student misconduct. Additionally, plans must include ways to respond to significant disruptions such as bomb threats and descriptions of behaviors on and off school grounds that constitute misconduct, including harassment and hazing.

## **9. What is Act 120?**

Act 120, passed in 2000, requires that schools develop plans to maintain a safe, orderly, civil and positive learning environment free from harassment, hazing and bullying. School boards must develop hazing and harassment policies and annually provide notice to students, parents and staff members of the policies. The Department of Education is annually required to survey schools and report on the number and types of harassment and hazing incidents and actions taken.

## **10. What is The No Child Left Behind Act?**

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) contains the most sweeping changes to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) since it was enacted in 1965. It changes the federal government's role in kindergarten-through-grade-12 education by asking America's schools to describe their success in terms of what each student accomplishes. The act contains four basic education reform principles: stronger accountability for results, increased flexibility and local control, expanded options for parents, and an emphasis on teaching methods that have been proven to work. The goal of NCLB is that all students succeed in school, graduate from high school and be taught by qualified teachers in safe school environments.